

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----271138Z 078560 /14

R 270520Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7554
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NOUAKCHOTT 1226

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UN, MO, MR, US
SUBJECT: SAHARA DISPUTE: WALDHEIM MEDIATION OR UNILATERAL ACTION

REF: SECTO 4127

1. I WARMLY SUPPORT FIRM RECOMMENDATIONS OF MY COLLEAGUES IN RABAT AND ALGIERS AGAINST INVOLVING OURSELVES--WHETHER IN ASSOCIATION WITH UN SYG WALDHEIM OR NOT--IN ANY IMMEDIATE EFFORT TO BRING ABOUT POLITICAL RESOLUTION OF SAHARA DISPUTE. LENGTHY LIST OF VOLUNTEER MEDIATORS WHO HAVE STEPPED FORWARD UNSUCCESSFULLY OVER PAST TWENTY MONTHS UNDERSCORES FACT MEDIATOR CAN ONLY HELP DISPUTANTS WHO TRULY WISH TO RESOLVE AN OUTSTANDING PROBLEM. THAT HAS NOT BEEN CASE IN PAST IN SAHARA DISPUTE. THERE IS LITTLE HARD EVIDENCE THAT SAHARA PROTAGONISTS HAVE YET SUFFICIENTLY ALTERED THEIR POSITIONS TO MAKE PRESENT ANY DIFFERENT. MOREOVER, AS RESULT OF SERIES OF LESS THAN EVENHANDED (PR PERHAPS, SKILLFUL) INVOLVEMENTS IN SAHARA DISPUTE OVER PAST TWO YEARS, UN SECRETARIAT AND SYG WALDHEIM PERSONALLY ARE FAR FROM MOST WELCOME POTENTIAL MEDIATORS IN THE WORLD SO FAR AS MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT (FIRM) IS CONCERNED.

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2. FROM OPTIC OF NOUAKCHOTT, SAUDI ARABS HAD AND STILL HAVE BEST CHANCE OF BRINGING ABOUT EQUITABLE SAHARA SETTLEMENT. OF ALL THOSE WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED THEIR GOOD OFFICES TO DATE, SAUDIS REPRESENT BEST COMBINATION OF DIPLOMATIC SKILL AND ECONOMIC CLOUT. IF COMING MONTHS INDICATE THAT ALGERIAN DESIRE FOR MOVEMENT ON SAHARA IS

MORE THAN SHORT-TERM TACTIC AND THAT MOROCCANS ARE PREPARED TO TALK BUSINESS, US MIGHT THEN DECIDE TO ENCOURAGE SAUDIS TO REVIVE THEIR STALLED NOVEMBER 1976 SETTLEMENT EFFORT. MAURITANIANS CAN BE COUNTED UPON TO SUPPORT ANY GENUINE SEARCH FOR AN EQUITABLE SETTLEMENT. ACUTELY CONSCIOUS OF THEIR MILITARY, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEAKNESS, MAURITANIANS HAVE TRADITIONALLY SOUGHT NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENTS. MOREOVER, THEY HAVE REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THEY COULD, IF LEFT ALONE, NEGOTIATE MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT WITH SAHARANS IN SIX MONTHS. THEY ARE ALSO KEENLY AWARE THEY ARE PAWNS IN NATIONAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL RIVALRY BETWEEN RABAT AND ALGIERS AND ARE CONSCIOUS OF THEIR INABILITY EITHER TO BRING ABOUT NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT THEMSELVES OR TO IMPEDE ALGIERS-RABAT RESOLUTION WHICH IS CONTRARY TO THEIR DESIRES OR INTERESTS.

3. BUT HAVING RECOMMENDED US LET WALDHEIM PURSUE ANY FOLLOWUP OF ALGERIAN SETTLEMENT HINTS ON HIS OWN, THAT ELSE? FROM CAPITAL OF WEAKEST AND LEAST INFLUENTIAL PLAYER, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT US SHOULD AT MINIMUM TAKE SYSTEMATIC FRESH LOOK AT WHERE SAHARA DISPUTE IS NOW; WHERE CURRENT FORCES SEEM TO BE TAKING PARTIES TO DISPUTE; AND WHETHER US LIKES PRESENT TRENDS. FROM HERE, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT SAHARA DRIFT IS NOT IN BEST INTERESTS OF US.

4. BOTH PLAYERS AND PROBLEM ARE FAR DIFFERENT IN MAY 1977
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THAN THEY WERE IN MID- OR LATE 1975. THREE KEY CHANGES ARE APPARENT HERE:
(FIRST) POLISARIO/SDAR (SAHARAN DEMOCRATIC ARAB REPUBLIC) IN 1975 WAS SMALL GROUP OF THREE OR FOUR HUNDRED IDEALIST MILITANTS AND PRAGMATIC OPPORTUNISTS SUPPORTED LOGISTICALLY AND MATERIALLY BY ALGERIA AND LIBYA. NOW IT IS SIGNIFICANT, COHERENT POLITICAL GROUPING WITH ITS OWN DISTINCT NATIONALIST IDENTITY AND SENSE OF MISSION, SUPPORTED BY (I) HIGHLY-MOTIVATED AND PROFESSIONALLY COMPETENT MILITARY ARM WHICH HAS REPEATEDLY DEMONSTRATED ITS COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS AND ITS ABILITY TO RANGE AT WILL THROUGHOUT FORMER SPANISH SAHARA, MAURITANIA AND MALI, AND OPERATE APPARENTLY FREELY IN SOUTHERN MOROCCO, AND BY (II) AN INCREASINGLY MORE SOPHISTICATED AND UBIQUITOUS DIPLOMATIC ARM. IN FACE OF NOWFOUND NATIONALISM FORGED IN CRUCIBLE OF 18 MONTHS OF GUERRILLA WARFARE AND MOROCCAN MILITARY EXCESSES AGAINST CIVILIAN POPULATION OF SAKIET AL-HAMRA, QUESTION INSISTENTLY ARISES OF WHETHER RABAT WILL EVER BE ABLE TO IMPOSE EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENTAL CONTROL OVER NORTHERN TWO-THIRDS OF

WESTERN SAHARA AND ITS PEOPLE. EQUALLY INTRIGUING, *4 78,&, WILL BOUMEDIENNE AND QUADHAFI, DESPITE THEIR CONTINUING SUPPORT, BE ABLE TO CONTROL THEIR APPRENTICE SORCERER FOR MUCH LONGER?

(SECOND) MAURITANIA IS AN OBVIOUSLY QUEASY SOCIETY/POLITY. LEADERSHIP IS PRESENTLY WANDERING WITHOUT EITHER PHILOSOPHICAL SENSE OF DIRECTION OR PRACTICAL PROGRAM. CORROSIVE EFFECT OF APPARENTLY UNENDING GUERRILLA WAR HAS AGGRAVATED LONGSTANDING LACKS OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRAINED MANPOWER. INEPT AND GENERALLY INEFFECTIVE BUREAUCRACY HAS STALLED INTO VIRTUAL IMMOBILITY AS PRESIDENT AND MINISTERS HAVE BEEN FORCED TO TURN THEIR ATTENTION FROM REQUIRED DAILY PRODDING OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS TO POLITICAL AND MILITARY PHASES OF ONGOING SAHARA WAR. AS ILLUSTRATION OF QUEAZINESS: SOME MEMBERS OF "ESTABLISHMENT" ARE FOR FIRST TIME QUESTIONING PRESIDENT'S ABILITY TO COPE WITH NEW CATEGORIES AND COMPLEXITIES OF

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PROBLEMS WHICH NOW FACE NATION AND GOVERNMENT; TECHNOCRATS IN INTERIOR ATTRIBUTE NEAR TOTAL LACK OF SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT (E.G. PHARMACEUTICALS IN DISPENSARIES) TO INDIFFERENCE OF THEIR BUREAUCRATIC COLLEAGUES IN NOUAKCHOTT

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----271131Z 078551 /12

R 270520Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7555
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY RABAT
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AND TO SPREADING TENDENCY ON PART OF MOST IN AUTHORITY TO BE CONCERNED ONLY WITH ADVANCING THEIR OWN SELFISH INTERESTS.

(THIRD) NUMBER OF MAURITANIANS IN UNIFORM HAS JUMPED FROM 2,500 IN LATE 1975 TO OVER 13,000 NOW. MOREOVER, SPARSE AVAILABILITY OF ANCIENT EQUIPMENT HAS GIVEN WAY TO EVER EXPANDING INVENTORY OF BRAND-NEW MILITARY PLAY-THINGS (ARMORED CARS, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, AIRPLANES). ADMINISTRATIVE AND LOGISTICAL SHORTCOMINGS WHICH ARE ENDBMIC THROUGHOUT CIVILIAN BUREAUCRACY AND PRIVATE SECTOR HAVE THEIR MILITARY EQUIVALENTS, WHITH GROWING RESTIVENESS (WE HEAR) THROUGHOUT MILITARY OVER MESS HALLS WITHOUT FOOD, PAYMASTERS WITHOUT MONEY AND DEPENDENTS WITHOUT ALLOTMENTS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, PROFESSIONAL MILITARY ARE INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED BY THEIR INABILITY TO STRIKE BACK EFFECTIVELY AND CONCLUSIVELY AT POLISARIO RAIDERS. IT WOULD HARDLY BE SURPRISE THEREFORE TO RUN ACROSS SOME GRADUATE OF SAUMUR OR CHERCHELLES SOMEDAY WHO THINKS HE AND HIS FELLOW OFFICERS CAN DO A FAR BETTER JOB OF RUNNING MAURITANIA THAN PRESENT TIRED AND FLOUNDERING CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP.

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5. REASONS WHY TRANSFORMATION OF ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF MAURITANIA INTO SAHARAN DEMOCRATIC ARAB REPUBLIC OR SOME SORT OF "PROGRESSIVE" MILITARY PEOPLES DEMOCRACY WOULD NOT BE IN US INTEREST NEED NOT BE SPELLED OUT IN DETAIL. BUT GIVEN PRSPECT OF SUCH TRANSYIRMAOSON, USG MAY WISH TO CONSIDER, WITHIN CONTEXT OF ITS PUBLIC NEUTRALITY ON SAHARA, EXTENDING TO MAURITANIA ITS PRIVATE POLICY OF SUPPORT FOR MOROCCO AND FOR PARTITION/ANNEXATION OF FORMER SPANISH COLONY. SPECIFICALLY, IN ATTEMPT TO HALD DRIFT IN MAURITANIA AND THEREBY STABILIZE SITUATION IN NORTHWEST CORNER OF AFRICA UNTIL SUCH TIME AS MEDIATION EFFORT CAN BE EFFECTIVE, USG MIGHT CONSIDER: (A) IN SHORT RUN: HELP OUR MOROCCAN FRIENDS MARSHAL THE SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING WE HAVE PROVIDED OVER THE YEARS INTO EFFECTIVE AERIAL SURVEILLANCE OF POLISARIO INFILTRATION ROUTES. AGGRESSIVE DAYTIME AND NIGHTTIME RECONNAISSANCE OF AREA LYING BETWEEN TAFAYA (ON MOROCCAN ATLANTIC COAST) AND CHEGGA (NORTHWEST K ALGERIA, MALI, MAURITANIAN TRIPOINT) WOULD UNCOVER SOUTH AND WESTWARD MOVING POLISARIO COLUMNS AND ENABLE SLOWER FLYING MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN AIRCRAFT TOGETHER WITH THEIR FORCES ON GROUND TO LOCATE AND ATTACK INVADING POLISARIO CONVOYS WHICH NOW MAKE THEIR WAY WITH IMPUNITY, HEADLIGHTS BLAZING, THE 800 MILES FROM TINDOUF TO TARGETS IN WESTERN SAHARA AND MAURITANIA (LIKE ZOU-

RATE). EFFECTIVE BALANCE BETWEEN POLISARIO AND MAURITANIANS,
SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVING GIRM MILITARY'S SENSE OF SELF-
WORTH AND CONFIDENCE OF CIVILIAN BUREAUCRACY, (B)
BEGINNING IMMEDIATELY BUT WITH MID-TERM EFFECT: ORGA-
NIZE OURSELVES AT LAST TO HELP MAURITANIANS HELP THEM-
SELVES IN DEVELOPMENT SPHERE AND THEREBY PRODUCE REAL
SENSE OF MOVEMENT TOWARD ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
OF COUNTRY. DESPITE OUR PROMISES AND BEST EFFORTS, WE
HAVE IN ACTUAL OPERATION TODAY AFTER THREE YEARS OF EX-
PANDING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE ACTIVITY A MODEST
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FOOD AID PROGRAM AND A SERIES OF SELF-HELP PROJECTS.
FASTER PACED AND MORE EFFECTIVE US DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM, LINKED WITH EFFORTS OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL DONORS,
MIGHT PROVIDE FIRM WITH MUCH NEEDED SENSE OF DIRECTION AND
CREATE CRITICALLY NECESSARY SENSE OF FORWARD MOVEMENT IN
MAURITANIAN DEVELOPMENT EFFORT.

7. WHILE COMBINATION OF PROPOSED SHORT-RUN MILITARY AD-
VICE AND MID-TERM DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS MAY UNTIMATELY NOT CMP NOT KEE
P "MODERATE" OULD DADDAH REGIME IN POWER, ACQUIES-
CING IN DRIFT IS VIRTUAL GUARANTEE OF CHANGE IN A DIRECTION
WE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY FIND DISTASTEFUL. HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 27-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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